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ABSTRACT

This practicum was designed to develop an effective homework-assistance program in an after school and evening youth center. Before the program was introduced, a facility was available, but few students attended. The author reorganized and restructured the facility and its services to attract participants, motivate them to complete their homework, and as a consequence, to improve their academic skills. Before implementation, the program was publicized, and rooms were redesigned to provide an environment conducive to learning. During implementation, tutors were recruited and computers employed to support student learning. Recreation and snacks were other enticements that encouraged students to learn. Students (largest sample=73) were asked to complete a questionnaire about the program. Results were positive: the number of students attending the program had quadrupled. Teachers reported that participants experienced improvement in academic subjects, social skills, and attitudes toward school. Parents and students recorded increases in motivation to complete homework assignments. Seven tables and four figures illustrate the practicum paper. Eight appendixes contain the surveys and supporting documents. (Contains 23 references.) (Author/SLD)

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To Increase The Number Of Participants Utilizing The Homework Assistance Program In A Youth Center Setting Through Tutoring, a Conducive Learning Environment, and Computer Instruction

ED 368 824

by

Annette Frances Hall

Cluster 48

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
In Child and Youth Studies in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

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1993

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL PAGE

This practicum took place as described

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April 9, 1993
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This practicum report was submitted by Annette Frances Hall under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

June 7, 1993
Date of Final Approval of Report

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ABSTRACT

To Increase The Number Of Participants Utilizing The Homework Assistance Program In A Youth Center Setting Through Tutoring, a Conducive Learning Environment, and Computer Instruction. Hall, Annette F., 1993: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies.
Youth Center/After School/Urban/Homework/Computer Usage/ Tutoring/Community Involvement/ Volunteers/ Recreation/ Motivation/Adolescents/Elementary/Junior High School/ High School/Leadership Training/ Study Groups/Peer Tutoring/Parents

This practicum was designed to develop an effective homework program in an after school/evening youth center. Before implementation of the practicum, a facility was available for participants to utilize to complete their homework. However, very few students attended the program.

The writer reorganized and restructured the facility and its services so as to attract participants to the program, motivate them to complete their homework, and as a consequence improve their academic skills. Before implementation, the program was publicized and rooms were redesigned to provide an environment conducive to learning. During implementation, tutors were recruited and computers employed to support student learning. Recreation and snacks were other enticements that encouraged students to attend.

The results of the program were extremely positive. The number of students attending the program quadrupled. Teachers reported that participants experienced improvement in academic subjects, social skills and attitude towards school. Parents and students recorded increase in motivation to complete homework assignments.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

Community Board

The youth program is a non-profit organization that is sponsored by a local religious parish. It is located in a large metropolitan area that is further sub-divided into community boards. The total area of the community board is 3.5 square miles.

The multicultural community board that the youth center is situated in has a total population of 102,000 people. Of that number, approximately 48% of the population are white Non-Hispanic, 15% Black Non-Hispanic, 25% Hispanic, and the remaining 12% either Asian-American/Eskimo/Native American. The youth in the community board comprise 20% of the population.

Besides the cultural mix, the socio-economic situation in the community board is also diverse. There are 13,000 people on public assistance with an additional 2,500 residents qualifying for food stamp assistance. There is also a large number of middle class and upper middle class

residents as well.

There are approximately 47,000 housing units. Of that number, there are two large housing projects, a few other elevated buildings, approximately 5,000 one-two family homes, several hundred walk-up homes, a number of condominiums and cooperative apartments (Statistics, Source Book, 1991).

Parish

The parish has a membership of over 800 families. Although the parish is actually a microcosm of the larger community board, the ethnic percentages differ somewhat from the larger community board. In the parish, the white Non-Hispanic population comprises 65% of the membership, the Hispanic population is a total of 20%, the African-American/Caribbean Black community comprise 10%, and the remaining membership are either Asian-American or Native American.

The parish and the surrounding neighborhood are experiencing a drop in population as well as an influx of lower income families. As a result, the parish administration is concerned about the decrease in contributions and the continual support of many of the outreach programs that are in greater demand because of the present economic crisis in the nation and in the community. Matter of fact, during the implementation of this practicum,

been informed that the youth program and the senior citizens programs cannot continue functioning with parish financial support.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The pastor is the executive administrator of the parish. He is supported by an associate pastor and ministers, or directors who are responsible for coordinating, managing, and supervising the various outreach programs for the parishioners and neighborhood residents.

The outreach programs are extensive. They include a senior citizen's center, a shelter program that offers lodging for the homeless during the winter months, a food distribution program, a school, a spiritual growth program, and a youth program.

This writer is the director of youth ministries for the parish. She came to this work location eight years ago from a school setting as a teacher trainer. Her prior extensive experiences include supervising, teaching, counseling, and coaching in various educational settings and youth programs. Presently, she is responsible for organizing, developing, and implementing activities for the youth in the neighborhood. She believes that each child's skills, talents, and capabilities are as unique as fallen snowflakes and are as different as the colors in a rainbow. Therefore, they require diverse support programs and various degrees of

nurturing to build self esteem, recognize their capabilities, reinforce their foundation to combat negative influences, and strengthen their commitment to themselves and to the community. The director hopes that the activities offered influence the youth to form positive cooperative relationships with each other and with the adult community.

At present, the writer is the direct supervisor of a staff in the youth program that coordinates and manages a recreation and sports program and other activities. One of the goals for the program is to encourage and inspire neighborhood youth to participate in meaningful activities that will help develop their minds and bodies so that they can grow to be participatory and independent members of the community.

The program includes a homework center, an aerobics program, a volleyball component, a basketball program, and a fitness center. The center also encompasses less rigorous activities such as table tennis, billiards, board games, and traditional "city" games including "skelly", "hopscotch", and "double dutch". There's also space set aside for television viewing and music listening.

The writer has several other responsibilities. She is the moderator and coordinator of the teen leadership club and the direct liaison person responsible for providing space for the different scout troops and little league programs. Although the writer is not the direct supervisor

of the scout leaders or the little league officers, she is responsible for maintaining communication with them, offering advise, and encouraging them to work in partnership with her to provide positive and motivating programs for the young people in the neighborhood.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The writer began to restructure the youth program and the different activities sponsored. One of the programs reorganized was the homework assistance component. The homework assistance room was available for the youth to utilize. However, the number of youth utilizing the homework room was minimal. The average daily attendance was eight, and there were no more than a total of 20 students who actually participated.

The staff was convinced that many more youth could avail themselves of the homework program. After questioning several participants, their responses substantiated that the homework assistance program was needed.

Problem Documentation

To provide evidence that such a program was necessary, the writer constructed a questionnaire (see Appendix A). The results of the questionnaire confirmed the need for a homework facility.

The students expressed the realization that homework was important and acknowledged that their grades would be positively affected if they spent additional time completing their assignments (see Table 1).

Table 1

The Value of Homework in the Learning Process

Question #2. Would your grades be better if you spent more time during your homework?

GRADES	YES	NO	MAYBE
GRADES 4-6	20	2	0
GRADES 7-8	8	4	1
GRADES 9-10	20	5	0
TOTALS	57	13	1

The students also recognized that homework was sometimes demanding and they needed further help in completing the assigned work (see Table 2).

Table 2

Needed Homework Assistance

Question # 7. Do you ever need help with your homework?

GRADES	YES	NO
GRADES 4-6	17	5
GRADES 7-8	10	3
GRADES 9-10	14	11
GRADE 11	5	6
TOTALS	46	25

The students who needed help identified several different people who assisted them with their homework. The positive response demonstrated that family members were part of the supporting team for them. Others sought help from their friends which illustrated the positive peer influence in their lives. The negative side of the responses depicted that some students were not receiving any assistance (see Table 3).

Table 3

Homework Helpers

Question # 10. Who helps you do your homework?

GRADES	PARENT	FRIEND	NO ONE	YOUTH CENTER	BROTHER SISTER
4-6	5	2	8	2	3
7-8	5	1	2	2	2
9-10	3	2	4	2	3
11-12	0	1	4	0	0
TOTALS	13	6	18	6	8

Note: The table only represents the 46 students who stated that they needed homework assistance.

The questionnaire also corroborated that the participants wanted such a program. They felt that if the center expanded its resources (additional references, computers, tutors, calculators, etc.), the youth center would be an improved support system for them (see Table 4).

Table 4

Responses to the Expansion of the Homework Facility

Question # 14. If all the items in questions 12 & 13 were added to the youth center's program would you utilize the homework room?

GRADES	YES	NO
GRADES 4-6	19	3
GRADES 7-8	13	0
GRADES 9-10	24	1
GRADE 11	9	2
TOTALS	65	6

The questionnaire identified which subject areas that the participants felt they needed homework assistance. Most students identified math, science, social studies, or foreign language as subjects that were difficult for them (see Table 5).

Table 5

Identification of Weak Subject Areas

Question # 8. What subjects give you the most trouble?

GRADES	MATH	SCIENCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	LANGUAGE ARTS	FOREIGN LANG
4-6	10	14	2	0	0
7-8	7	3	1	1	5
9-10	10	5	3	7	7
11	5	3	4	0	1
TOTALS	32	25	10	8	13

Causative Analysis

The writer concluded that there were a multitude of factors that contributed to students' neglect in completing homework assignments. Some culpability was shared by the students, educators, and parents.

Adolescents

Although the students needed assistance and support to complete their homework assignments, most of them didn't seek help from the staff, and some students didn't receive assistance from anyone. As a matter of fact, a few of them failed classes without ever asking for help.

There were a number of possible reasons why the students didn't ask for assistance with their homework projects. Some of the reasons were directly a product of adolescents' attitudes. Adolescents are very peer oriented. Some felt that to seek assistance was a signal that they were stupid or ignorant in the eyes of their peers. Others thought that they were suppose to be invincible and seeking help generated a perception of vulnerability and helplessness in front of adults.

Adolescents' egos are fragile. They perceive a request for help as a blow to their self esteem. Therefore, some teenagers camouflaged their academic difficulties rather than to seek assistance to remedy them. Most adults did not realize that the students needed help until they reviewed

their report cards, or the teachers called their parents for conferences regarding failing grades, or poor work habits. This writer wasn't aware of academic difficulty for some of the participants attending the youth program until she questioned why some of the athletes were not playing on their school teams. She realized that their failing grades prevented them from playing. When she asked some of them why they didn't seek assistance with their academic subjects, most of them shrugged their shoulders.

Other students perceived homework as trivial and tedious. Spending time doing homework deducted valuable time from more interesting matters. They preferred fraternizing with their peers and engaging in recreational activities or other projects.

Adults

Students were not entirely to blame for incomplete homework assignments. Some of the responsibility rested on the shoulders of the adults. Those adults included school personnel as well as parents.

Teachers have a responsibility to motivate students to do their assignments. However, often homework assignments are given haphazardly, or as busy work. Students are very perceptive. If they perceive that adults really aren't expending quality time on a project, they conclude that the project or homework assignment is meaningless, and

consequently isn't significant to complete.

On occasions students need guidance. Teachers are working within a time frame and homework is given at the last minute with no direction as to how the homework should be accomplished. Therefore, homework was often incomplete or unacceptable because the directions were not explicit.

Teachers in their zeal for the students to learn, give too much homework. The students legitimately perceive the homework as a chore and are overwhelmed by the assignments. If the homework was completed, much of the material was not retained or comprehended. As a consequence, many of them could not follow the class assignments on subsequent days if the homework was related to the class work.

Sometimes, students sought help from parents and other adults but did not get their support because of parental work responsibilities, home burdens, or the inability to understand the subject matter. Parents who do not set aside their responsibilities to assist their children, contribute to their children's frustration and unresponsiveness to the teachers' demands. However, a few parents are unresponsive to their children's homework assignments for a variety of other reasons. On some occasions, parents have the attitude that they do not have to help the student to do their homework. It's the sole responsibility of school personnel to support the child with his assignments. Some parents are also guilty of treating their children's homework

assignments secondary to other obligations. Children should clean their rooms, go to the store, and perform other household duties prior to beginning their homework. After finishing the chores, the child is too tired and disinterested in doing homework.

In many instances, children live in dysfunctional families. They are required to be parent for their younger brothers and sisters. Homework assignments were the least of their worries as they struggled to survive in a home environment that was not supportive or even considered them as relevant. There are pockets of the community where violence dictates that homework is relegated to the "back burner" as children grapple with every day existence.

The Youth Center

The youth center's program structure and facility were not conducive to a learning environment. There was insufficient time set aside for a total homework period. Children who came to the center for homework actually had only 30 minutes before other children were allowed to come into the center for recreational activity. After the thirty minute time period, there were too many other activities occurring simultaneously that distracted participants and discouraged them from doing their homework. Basketball, table top games, board games and other activities were underway throughout the facility while some children were

still trying to complete their homework assignments.

In addition, this writer believes that some participants and other youth in the neighborhood were unaware of the homework program because of insufficient publicity. Others, may have wanted to attend the program for homework help but the scheduling time might have been inappropriate for them. The staff also may not have placed enough emphasis on the program to sufficiently encourage the participants to attend the homework component.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Authors outlined different reasons why students submitted incomplete homework assignments or retreated from doing homework altogether.

Earle (1992) suggested a multitude of reasons why students did not complete their homework assignments. Students do not see the connection between homework and school work. They perceive homework as an obstacle that delayed them from doing other more interesting activities.

Earle also implied that for others, homework contributed to tension in family situations. Therefore, students preferred leaving homework assignments undone rather than have conflict with parents. This writer has been told by students that they rather faced the consequences from their teacher or copy another student's homework before they went to class the following day than to have their

parents help them with their lessons.

Earle also identified the home environment as a reason why students did not complete their assignments. The home situation supplied too many distractions or obstacles that prevented students from concentrating as they should. There just wasn't space set aside that encouraged a positive attitude towards homework.

Ivey (1988), a junior high school teacher, concurs with Earle's opinion about home conditions and their possible negative impact on children trying to complete their homework. Although there was a time in her professional career that no reason was accepted for incomplete homework, Ivey discovered that her attitude was unfair and erroneous. She realized that some students' responsibilities in the home overshadow their obligation to accomplish their homework. Frequently, the home environment was an impediment for children and actually hindered them from doing their assignments.

Other authors considered motivation or the lack of it as a critical concern involved in the homework issue. "Traditionally motivation has been interpreted as a state of arousal, or drive that energizes people and orients them toward instrumental behavior" (Brophy, as cited in Glasgow, 1989, p. 1). Therefore, students who were not motivated did not do their homework assignments competently, or bother doing it at all. Students are like anyone else; if there is

no interest in the task, then there's no reason to accomplish the task.

Walberg (1984) echoed the view of Brophy and Glasgow when he stated, "Large amounts of instruction and high degrees of ability, for example, may count for little if students are unmotivated or instruction is unsuitable" (Walberg, 1984, p. 20). Incomplete homework reflects inadequate motivation.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

Goal

The following goal was projected for this practicum. Participants will utilize the after school homework facility in the youth program. Once the program was implemented the writer expected several other results due to her efforts to increase the number of students utilizing the facility.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum.

1. The writer expects an increase in the number of children who utilized the homework program.

2. The youth program will develop a working relationship with the teachers and administrators in the schools.

3. The students will be motivated so that they want to complete their homework assignments.

4. Improvement of students' grades who utilize the homework facility.

Measurement of Outcomes

Measurement tools

To demonstrate an increase in the number of students utilizing the homework facility, an attendance sheet (Appendix B) was devised in order for the students to sign each time they attended the homework component. The attendance sheet provided an accurate accounting of the number of students who attended and identified the participants. The writer then copied the names of the students and the dates of attendance in the traditional roll book that is utilized in many schools. This gave the writer an efficient and effective way to identify who was missing on any day, and review the student's attendance patterns to determine if some students were failing to come consistently or have dropped out of the program. In cases of erratic attendance patterns, the writer was able to identify those participants and call or visit their homes, or interview them later during the recreational component to determine why they were no longer attending the homework component. For those students who were attending the homework component regularly, the writer was able to acknowledge their efforts and begin to write attendance certificates for those participants.

The writer examined whether or not the students perceived themselves as having improved motivation doing

their homework and increased positive attitude towards school by asking them to complete a questionnaire (Appendix C). The questionnaire seemed to be an appropriate tool to evaluate the students' perception because it was non-threatening, succinct, and somewhat similar to the questionnaire that many of the participants completed before the homework facility was restructured.

To investigate whether or not the students have improved their grades or improved their understanding in subject areas since attending the homework program, the writer requested that the teachers of the students complete a questionnaire (Appendix D). The questionnaire was chosen as an evaluation instrument for a couple of reasons. The questions formulated addressed distinctive evaluation tools that the teacher could employ to determine if the students have improved their knowledge of several different subject areas. In addition, the writer recognized that teachers are very strapped for time and cannot spend a great deal of time filling out papers or conducting interviews. She felt that a succinct questionnaire that contained quality questions was more efficient for the teachers to complete rather than the writer setting up interviews with each teacher to determine the progress of several students in her class that attended the after school program.

The writer also asked the staff in schools to complete a survey (Appendix E) in order to determine if a stronger

working relationship had been developed between the youth program and the schools. The writer chose this method of evaluation for the same reasons as the questionnaire to teachers that was previously mentioned.

The parents were also requested to complete a questionnaire (Appendix F) to determine their opinion of the impact of the homework center on their child's learning experience. The writer needed the parents' point of view and thought that the questionnaire would give them a chance to contemplate the questions and offer some suggestions to the staff as to how the homework program had helped to support them in their efforts to help their children's academic progress. The writer also thought that the questionnaire sent home would give the parents time to complete the answers rather than trying to call them at home. This arrangement was also much better for the writer since her hours of arriving home to call parents were quite late. She couldn't call them from the work site because of the number of participants that demanded her time, the high noise level, and the length of time that was required to conduct a phone interview. The interruptions would be consistent and in most cases often. If necessary, or requested, in-person interviews could be scheduled.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

To develop an effective homework facility in order to motivate and entice youngsters to attend, this writer reviewed numerous journal articles to help her develop ideas. The literature was comprehensive. The authors had several excellent suggestions.

Teachers' Responsibility

To encourage students to do their homework assignments, teachers who assign homework must give feedback. Walberg, Paschal, and Weinstein (1985) argue that learning seems to increase when teachers grade and comment on homework assignments. Giving feedback persuades students that the material is important and their efforts are recognized. Positive comments are morale boosters for children. In cases where the assignments need to be corrected, teachers can still give encouraging comments that reveals to the child that his efforts are acknowledged, and with guidance the quality of his homework can improve.

Teachers can help students formulate positive attitudes

towards homework by changing their methods of assigning homework. Students view homework as something negative. Teachers are partly guilty of implanting this perception in students' minds when they assign homework as punishment. "That practice only communicates to students that homework is an unpleasant activity to be avoided" (Partin, 1986, p. 118).

When teachers dispense homework to keep students busy (Koppman, 1984), students legitimately view the assignment as a waste of their time. This practice should cease. Students should understand the rational for their homework assignments (Salend & Schliff, 1988, p. 399). Assignments should be practical and relevant to the subject matter. Attempting to integrate topics so that students understand the connection to everyday experiences is a lot more pertinent to students than giving assignments in isolation.

If students were intrinsically motivated to finish their homework, it would be easier for students and teachers because "they will engage in these tasks willingly without need for extrinsic motivation" (Glasgow, 1919, p.3). However, in reality, students require extrinsic motivation to complete their assignments (Glasgow).

Glasgow offers suggestions as basic as award certificates to influence students to complete a goal. This method of recognition is very motivating especially to elementary school age children. In addition, this writer suggests other reinforcers such as stars, extended

privileges, a special pass to the library, displays of homework, etc. Glasgow also realizes that certificates of awards are not the only means to inspire students to do their homework assignments.

Conducive Environment

The environment must also be conducive to learning (Glasgow, 1989). Students are sometimes required to do homework in an uncomfortable environment such as little light or no heat (Ivey, 1988). There's no way students can be expected to complete homework assignments in surroundings that are disagreeable.

What Ivey did to remedy the problem of incomplete homework assignments was to organize an after school study hall for those children who required a different environment to complete their assignments. Such a suggestion is an excellent motivating factor for students to have a place to go to complete homework assignments. In addition, there is someone present that can support them if they are in need of further help with the assignments.

In the sometimes turbulent urban areas, students are more concern with discovering a safe haven to protect themselves. In the violent plague East New York section of Brooklyn, New York, where Thomas Jefferson High School is located, the principal lamented that in the past year that 50 of her children were killed (Sisk, 1992). In the same

school, the principal stated that each day she has more than 40 children who are homeless (Sisk).

Whitney M. Young Learning Center, (WMYLC) (Mitchell, 1987) in Portland, Oregon is located in an area similar to that of East New York. The staff at WMYLC has attempted to provide an environment that is favorable to learning. The center originally had one room for homework instruction, inadequate heat, and a substantial noise level. However, the center has expanded to include three large classrooms and another room on the lower level. The rooms are furnished with books, furniture, and reading material. The previous year's criticism about the noise level and deficient heat supply subsided after those problems were addressed and eliminated. The staff of WMYLC recognized the need for students to have somewhere to study and complete homework assignments. Without such a facility, many more students would be incapable of succeeding in school because so often homework assignments are the basis for the following day's class work.

Adult Tutors

In addition to maintaining an atmosphere conducive to learning, some writers recommend the utilization of tutors as support personnel for helping students with their homework assignments. Some agencies, such as WMYLC, employed several teachers as tutors to help in homework instruction.

They had the finances available to hire staff for this purpose. WMYLC also involved adult volunteers as tutors. "All of the tutors worked with the students individually to instill self-confidence and study skills" (Mitchell, 1987, p. 5).

Other agencies also utilized volunteer adults as tutors. In Chicago, the Howard Street after school store front tutoring program, (Morris, Shaw, & Penny, 1990) incorporated the idea of volunteer adult tutors. They selected second and third grade students who read below grade level. The results of their program indicated that the at-risk students improved their reading. "One-third of the tutored children made accelerated growth in reading, moving this group, by ability, back into the educational "mainstream" of their public school classrooms" (p.146). "Another 30% of the tutored students gained a full year in reading" (p. 146).

In Alexandria Virginia, at the Patrick Henry School, adult volunteers from the army base were employed as tutors for minority underachieving 4th, 5th, & 6th graders (Engman, 1992). The children selected were identified as low achieving students based on low scores in math and reading on standardized tests or their failing grades in these two subject areas (Engman). They received help with homework and academic skills twice a week. The improved scores in reading and math confirmed the benefits of the after school tutoring

program.

Peer Tutors

In the literature, some authors advocate the use of children as tutors. Allen & Feldman (1973) champion children as tutors because of the benefits reaped by the tutors. Their study confirms that benefits for tutors are positively affected by their work with the students they tutored (p.1). "Results of their experiment support the hypothesis that acting as a tutor for a younger child is a useful technique for enhancing the academic performance of low-achieving children" (p. 5).

Gartner, Kolhler, & Riessman (1971) reaffirm the advantages of utilizing children as tutors. In the Mobilization for Youth after school programs in New York City in the 1960's, the evaluators recognized the significance of employing children as tutors. The tutors positively changed their attitude towards learning and improved their self esteem. The tutors and their students both improved their scores on achievement tests.

Resource Material

Because of budget restraints in localities, numerous libraries have shorter hours and opened fewer days. Books and other resource materials are not easily accessible for students to use. Students need to be able to access a

multitude of references in order to locate information and do research work for their assignments. An after school setting or school library with these resources can tremendously support the students in their efforts to find information.

Computer Technology

Some agencies utilize the computer to assist in homework instruction. The Memphis Apple Classroom of Tomorrow (ACOT) project is an example of such a project (Ross, Smith, Morrison, & Erickson, 1989). The grant from Apple Computer Inc. provided students with computers for their individual use in school and at home. The students utilized the computer for computer-based instruction (CBI) and for long distance tutoring.

"Proponents of CBI believe that the program offers substantial benefits to students especially the at-risk student" (p. 23). The student is able to work in a non-threatening environment. The student is the master of the computer. The student is able to build self-esteem because he is actively involved in his own learning environment (Ross, Smith, Morrison, & Erickson).

The students were also assigned individual college tutors who were enrolled in the masters program for teaching at Memphis State. The college students actually tutored the students by way of long distance tutoring through the modem

of the computer. When the students needed support or assistance with their subjects, the students communicated via the electronic bulletin board.

WMYLC also invested in a computer for student use. However, the articles do not make mention of how the computer was utilized for academic instruction.

In the Patrick Henry School, computer software programs were used by students to solve math problems (Engman, 1992).

Study Groups

While reading the literature and doing every day activities, this writer was envisioning other strategies that possibly could be employed to develop an effective homework program. She thought about the possibility of forming study groups. The children could work together and study. Study group formation reaps many benefits for the participants. The oral discussions that take place among the students facilitate learning and cultivate positive social skills. Johnson & Johnson (1989, p. 32) determine that small group study allows children "greater learning, retention, and critical thinking". Learning to work in partnership with their peers will also help the students in the future. "Employers typically value verbal communication, responsibility, initiative, and interpersonal and decision-making skills" (p. 32).

Newsletter

The writer also foresaw the children involved in other activities to improve their academic skills. The writer anticipated the students taking charge of the youth newsletter. WMYLC employed this strategy successfully. This exercise should improve the students' writing and spelling skills.

In addition, the newsletter should encourage the students to expand their horizons, explore new interests, and stimulate a growth in vocabulary and reading aptitude.

Word Processing

The writer would have liked to see the participants offered word processing training to attract them to attend the homework instruction component. This exercise should include career skill exercises in resume writing, business letter formats, cover letter applications, and typing instruction. The word processing training can also encourage students to complete their homework assignments using the computer.

Description of Selected Solutions

This writer was prepared to try several of the solutions mentioned above in her plan to develop an effective homework program.

Workshop for Teachers

As the director of the after school homework center, this writer had no control over the homework assignments given to the children. Nevertheless, as a person interested in forming an effective homework assistance program, she spoke at the faculty conference of one of the local schools on the topic of effective homework assignments.

She suggested to teachers different types of assignments that would be more supportive of learning for the students. In addition, she recommended that teachers not assign homework as a punishment. In the past, this writer was also guilty of this practice and recognized that homework as punishment contributed to negative reaction of students towards assignments.

In addition, she explained the homework assistance program to the faculty of the school. She asked the teachers to help identify students who are in need of assistance so that contact could be made to the parents and the students.

She committed the staff, the tutors, and herself to remaining in contact with those teachers whose students attended the homework program.

Tutoring

The writer was also interested in implementing tutoring as an option to employ in developing an effective homework program. All of the literature reviewed confirmed that

tutoring is a significant strategy utilized in improving children's homework production.

The writer initiated several steps to put the tutoring component in place. She invited teachers from the local schools to volunteer. The writer appealed to neighborhood residents to volunteer time and their talents. She asked the teen leadership members to volunteer a day a month to assist with instruction. Some children attending the religious confirmation classes needed to perform community service. She asked for volunteers from that group.

She also requested assistance from the 7th & 8th graders to help the younger children with their homework assignments when they completed their homework. The director along with other staff members served as tutors.

The writer conducted an orientation workshop for the tutors to assist them in their efforts. The orientation workshop reviewed what would be expected and how to involve children in their learning experience.

Advertisement

The writer advertised the homework instruction program in the local newspapers, places of worship, in the schools, and on community bulletin boards. When the children came to the center, she reminded them that the homework component would be restructured and that they should come and visit the facility even while preparations were being made to

initiate a new program. The writer identified students who were in need of assistance by soliciting the help of teachers and parents.

Computer Technology

This writer utilized computers to stimulate interest in the homework assistance program and to improve the academic skills of students/participants in the homework component. The literature substantiated the value of computer based instruction in education. She purchased various computer software programs so that the students could utilize them independently, or with others to work on skills that were weak.

The computers were also employed to entice students to volunteer as tutors. Those students who volunteered would be given word processing instruction.

Report of Action Taken

Facility Conducive to Learning

In order for the homework assistance program to be effective, an appropriate facility had to be available. To be assured that there was a location that was conducive to learning, this writer with the support of her staff made plans and began to redesign the basement facility of the lyceum in order to include space for homework instruction. The main room, a very large square space was transformed

into the games room and two adjacent rooms were structured to be utilized for participants in the homework program.

The smaller of the two rooms was painted and refurnished. Furniture procured included three bookcases, four new desks and four computer tables that were purchased from the profits from the junior high school dances and the children's carnival. Posters were framed and placed on the walls of the computer room. The floor was retiled and all light bulbs were replaced to provide improved lighting. A chalk board was secured to one of the walls for use when needed.

The larger adjacent room, which was formerly the games room was also transformed to a study room. Two rectangular tables and three desks were relocated in that room. Supplies were kept in the room for students' use. Pencils, pens, crayons, markers, pencil sharpeners, and looseleaf pages were available for participants' use.

Resource Material

Resource materials were needed to supplement the program and help support students with assignments. Since finances were a problem the writer and her staff appealed to neighborhood residents for reference materials and other resources that could be used for instruction. Thus far, residents contributed two workable electric typewriters, a computer desk, dictionaries, thesauri, and encyclopedias.

These materials complemented the few texts that were already procured.

Other Equipment and Supplies

The staff still needed money to buy additional equipment. Although the staff was unsuccessful at receiving funding from the proposals submitted to local banks, government agencies, and corporations, funds were raised by other methods. Revenues raised from the junior high school dances and the carnival were used to buy computers and software. Consequently, three additional computers, and a printer were purchased. By the third week of the program, there were five working computers for the participants' use. In the meantime educational software was reviewed and bought for the program. A slate board was also purchased to replace the chalkboard in the computer room (The dust from the chalkboard could have been damaging to the computer equipment). The chalkboard was removed and secured to one of the walls in the main room. After a request by one of the high school students, a clock was also placed in the computer room.

Publicity

The writer advertised in the local newspapers, places of worship, distributed flyers to the elementary schools, personally invited students, and solicited teachers to help

disseminate information about the homework program. Participants who came to the youth center were constantly reminded that the restructured homework program would start shortly. They were given flyers to take home as the time approached for the program to begin.

Name

The writer and her staff decided that the homework facility needed a special name to demonstrate to students the importance of the program. The name chosen was **ACTION** (Academic, Computer, Training, Instruction, and Orientation for Neighborhood Youth) **CENTER**. However, after discussing the name with the students, they decided they preferred **ACTION YOUTH**. The main door to the computer room has the name inscribed on it.

Tutors

Implementation of the plan called for employing volunteer tutors to help students with homework. The writer expected student volunteers as well as adult volunteers. She placed notices in places of workshop, on community bulletin boards, and on local cable channels. She also personally appealed to the high school students. Three volunteers, an adult, and two students came forth. The volunteers came on Tuesday or Wednesday. The adult volunteer came every Wednesday. The student volunteers alternated on Tuesdays.

For the first few sessions, the small number who responded to help was not a problem on either Tuesday or Wednesday because the students' needs were met. However, Thursdays were a tremendous stress because the writer was the only tutor. A second appeal was placed. While the writer was hoping for more volunteers, she called upon the seventh and eighth graders who came to the program to be tutors for 30 minutes after snack on Thursdays. They were assigned a station. Three of them were placed with the second and third graders. Four were assigned to be with the fourth and fifth grade girls or boys. Two seventh graders were placed in charge of the computer room. They turned on the computers and set them to the correct drive.

After the second appeal, more volunteers signed to help. The additional tutors helped a great deal to relieve Thursdays' stress and help on the other days. Although the seventh and eighth grade girls were competent, this writer maintained that they shouldn't tutor until they completed their assignments. They went back to their original schedule. However, on occasions, they have served as tutors and monitors when the writer had to seek their help again.

Since the second appeal, there has been a minimum of three adult tutors consistently present. Eight high school students also volunteered but their attendance has been irregular and for some of them the attendance was sporadic. However, when they were present, they were very competent.

Some additional students volunteered for the recreational component directly following the homework sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Their assistance accounted for a smoother transition from the homework segment to the recreational activities.

Tutor Availability

Additional tutors would have been of more benefit to the students. The writer did not take into account that the hours of the afternoon program conflicted with adult working hours, which made it difficult for people to volunteer. In addition, some of the participants serviced needed remedial help in several subject areas and needed one-on-one tutoring. There were not sufficient number of tutors to do this type of tutoring consistently. The writer didn't expect the number of participants to grow as quickly as they did and a plead for more tutors was needed again.

To correct this situation in the future, the writer needs to appeal to the personnel in the education offices of the local colleges to request that they approve **ACTION YOUTH** as one of the programs accepted for internship for their teachers-in-training. This should help the program obtain more tutors. In addition, some high school seniors are required to perform community service as a prerequisite for graduation. These schools need to be contacted also to request that **ACTION YOUTH** be considered as a recipient

agency of their services.

Computer Instruction

Computer training, instruction, and orientation were an integral part of the homework instruction plan. The writer felt that the computer segment was a very relevant portion for the participants. After the students completed their assignments, they used the computers for different software programs. In addition to the children utilizing the software programs, the writer had expected to teach computer literacy. However, plans were changed in the afternoon segment because of other demands.

The writer was disappointed that she didn't have time to teach computer literacy. She actually taught a few of the students how to turn on the computers, set the drives, and type the code words for the computer software. These students were called computer supervisors. In addition to these tasks, they made sure the computer operators didn't bring food or drink into the room.

The participants flocked to the computers. They used a multitude of software programs and were exposed to programs in different subject areas. In fact, there was always a waiting line to utilize the computers. Time limitations were placed on the computer usage so as to give as many participants as possible an opportunity to use them.

Some of the youth utilized the word processing software

and were introduced to commercial software packages. They helped compose the newsletter, the monthly calendars, and contributed articles (see Appendix G) voicing their positive opinions about **ACTION YOUTH**. The articles actually reflected the students' excitement with the homework component. Some of the students typed their comments using the word processing software. Others, actually wrote their comments in regular penmanship and different students typed for them on the computer.

Workshop for Teachers

This writer met with staff members of the local parochial school where most of the elementary school participants in the youth center attended. The workshop was the initial step in the implementation of **ACTION YOUTH**. During the workshop, the writer conferred with the school's staff regarding practicality of homework and helped to generate a discussion as to ways of assigning more meaningful homework assignments for the students. The writer also offered suggestions to the teachers regarding different ways of motivating students. She outlined her plans for the homework program and identified the outcomes she hoped to achieve with the students. She also invited the school's staff to visit the program and observe the students at work.

Schedule

ACTION YOUTH was scheduled for two times a day, three days a week. The elementary and junior high school age children attended Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in the afternoon time slot from 2:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. During the hours of 2:00 p.m. to 4:15 p.m. homework assistance and computer work were the only activities that occurred. This scheduling allowed the participants to concentrate on their assignments without having to deal with distractions. Most of the participants completed their homework assignment during this time frame. However, those who needed more time were scheduled to remain in the rooms to complete their assignments until 5:15 p.m. or thereafter.

Once the homework program began the schedule was followed close to expectations. However, students who had assignments to complete after 4:15 p.m. did not have one of the adult tutors to help because other activities of the youth center started. (Participants attending the recreational program demanded the staff's time and energy, and the volunteers were finished for the day). The students completed the assignments independently or with assistance from older students. If the students had to use the computer for word processing or math tutorial, they were allowed to remain in the computer room.

The majority of the high school age participants attended **ACTION YOUTH** from 6:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on

Tuesdays and Thursdays. However, the time schedule was not strictly limited to these days. Some students utilized the resources on Mondays or Fridays by coming in during regular center hours.

Orientation

Initially, the students in the after school segment were given an orientation workshop and were introduced to the policy, goals, and expectations, of the program. In addition, the orientation gave detailed directions as to the procedures they were to follow. They were to come downstairs and sign in, each and every day. They were shown where their outside clothing was to be hung. After they removed their outside clothing and placed their books on the tables, they were advised that they would be given snacks. Once the children were finished with their snacks, they were expected to begin their homework assignment.

The children were given a tour of the rooms and were alerted that they could not have any food or drink in the computer room because of the potential damage to the equipment. After the tour, the children were given an opportunity to ask questions, discuss, or comment on any aspects of the program.

Snacks

Snacks were distributed to the elementary, junior high age students, and the few high school students who came during the afternoon session. Snacks were generally cookies or donuts, and soda. They were distributed in the beginning of the homework session. Sometimes the participants were treated to pizza. On these occasions, the pizza was a surprise to the participants, and it was given to them as an extra reward for their dedication and their willingness to come for homework help.

The writer didn't expect any problems with the snack time. However, adjustments had to be made. The staff originally bought the snacks each day. However, they thought it would be more beneficial to the participants if they made the decisions regarding the choice of snacks each day. The staff asked for volunteers from the older participants to form a committee to be in charge of buying the snacks. The children actually went to the store to choose the kinds of cookies, crackers, donuts, and soda each day. They were also responsible for replenishing cups, and napkins.

Snacks were originally left on the table for students to share. However, some minor annoying problems arose. Some participants took too many cookies. Others were sloppy, spilled soda and left their cups and crumbs. The snack committee's duties were expanded to include a list of students each week who were to be part of the clean-up, and

others who were responsible to distribute the snacks to the participants. In addition, the participants were given a time limit for their break because they were taking too much time to begin their homework.

Format - After school Component

ACTION YOUTH was available to students originally from grade three through high school. The restriction was placed on first and second graders because the facility did not have sufficient materials to accommodate those students after homework instruction. However, a couple of parents asked if the staff would accept their second grade children in the program. The parents' request was granted on a trial basis. The two children remained for the duration of the program. A few games, educational as well as board games were bought to accommodate them.

Basically, the same format occurred every homework session. After the students signed the attendance sheet, put away their outer clothing, they were given snacks. The children were then encouraged to do their homework. However, in spite of all the preparations, modifications were made in the set-up. The original arrangement for rooms were revamped and supplementary space had to be utilized.

1. Initially, the students were allowed to choose where they wanted to sit. Nevertheless, the staff recognized that this arrangement was not plausible. When the students were

scattered among different grade levels, it was difficult for the tutors to work with them. The tutors discovered that some of the students were in the same class, and had problems with the same assignment. It was easier for the tutors to discuss assignments with the students in a group and then divide them for further help if needed. The staff placed the students in specified locations.

2. After the first few sessions, the writer realized that the two rooms set aside for the homework program were inadequate to accommodate the number of participants. Other arrangements were made. The main room was also redesigned to conform to a learning environment. Tables and chairs were rearranged to support learning. Old light bulbs were replaced with new bulbs so as to reflect a brighter atmosphere. The chalk board that was originally affixed in the computer room was reinstalled in this room. Students were assigned stations (locations) within the main room because it was so much bigger. The computer room and the adjacent room were used for individualized and small group instruction.

3. A group of seventh and eighth grade girls requested space separate from the younger children. They asked if the larger of the two originally redesigned rooms could be set aside for them. The basis for their request was two-fold. At times, the behavior of the younger children disturbed them. They thought that the children were too noisy and distracted

them from doing their assignments. In addition, they preferred more privacy so as to discuss their assignments and other topics without disturbing the other participants. The staff acceded to their request. However, the room they requested wasn't adequate. On the first floor of the facility, adjacent to the gymnasium was a very large room that could accommodate them comfortably. This extra room was selected as space to be utilized for this group of students.

The tutors circulated in the different rooms to examine students' progress, and when necessary assisted them with their assignment. After the completion of the homework, the participants used the computers for educational games. They were given a choice of software programs. The software programs were placed in the computers for them by either the computer supervisors or the adult. The computer supervisors were already taught how to use the educational software games. In turn, they tutored others. Each time a student sat down to use a game for the first time, someone sat with him/her to explain how to play the game. On occasion, the staff and volunteers were able to sit with the students and help them with some problem solving activities that were part of the software programs.

This writer had hoped to form study groups among the students. However, she was only able to form one study group and that came about by the participants' own request. As mentioned previously, seventh and eighth grade girls in the

program requested a separate room for their homework time. They were given a large sound proof room adjacent to the gymnasium. Most of them were in the same class. They were eventually joined by a high school student, three other girls who attended a different school, and a couple of the males who were in their class. They worked together on projects, and when they had tests they split into smaller groups, studied and shared information. One of the tutors worked with them illustrating outlining techniques, pneumonics, and summary skills.

Incentives - After school Component

The writer maintains that the employment of computers helped to attract students to the homework program. They wanted to use them, and once on the computers, the students resisted when it was time for them to give someone else a chance. In addition to the computers as an incentive, the recreational component influenced some of the participants to attend the program. After the homework session was completed for the afternoon, most of the participants remained to utilize the recreational component of the program. Although other children utilized the facility during the recreation session, the homework students had the advantage of signing up first to use some of the more popular games such as the billiard tables, air hockey games, and the basketball courts.

In addition, on many Thursdays, the **ACTION YOUTH** participants were treated to the use of the upstairs gymnasium facility from 4:15 to 5:30 without other children being present. The participants looked forward to this special treatment. The staff wanted to have other special events for the participants each and every month to help motivate them and encourage them to continue coming to the program to do their homework. However, thus far the special events have not materialized to the degree planned.

Format - Evening Component

The program's structure was much different from the afternoon program. Most of the participants attending the evening segment worked independently. Initially, any students who needed help on Tuesdays could not be helped immediately because the staff members were involved with other participants in many of the different recreational activities. The students waited patiently. Sometimes the sessions were interrupted because the center was understaffed, and the staff member had to attend to some other matter. The one-on-one sessions were going past 11:00. Changes had to be made because this time period was too late and unacceptable for the students as well as the writer and the assistant director who stayed with the students until the assignments were completed. A second appeal was made to the public. After the second plea, people volunteered to

give support for the evening program. The students who could come during a set time frame were teamed with adult volunteers. Their sessions were one-on-one.

There were a few students who needed help periodically and came infrequently. These students were not paired with a tutor. If they came on Thursdays, a staff member helped them without a waiting time. However, on Tuesdays the participants had to wait for a staff member to be free because of the recreational format that was simultaneously occurring.

For the most part, the high school students utilized the facility independently. They used the book references, and the telecommunications program to access additional resource information. They operated the tutorials in math, science, and Spanish, and the word processing software to type their reports. A few of them used the SAT and Calculus software to practice and reinforce skills.

CHAPTER V

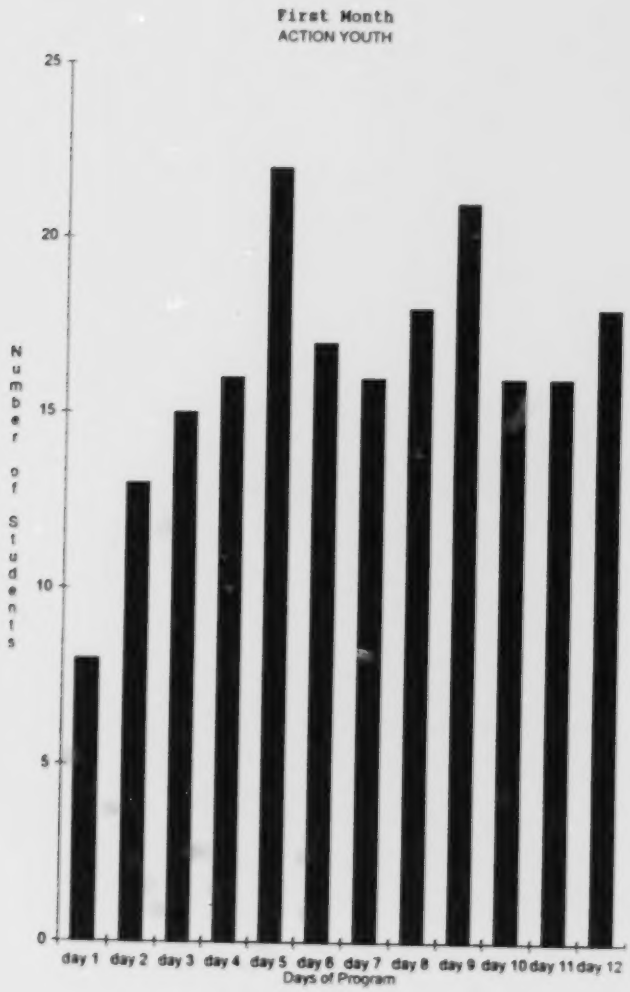
RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The homework assistance program in the youth center was under utilized. The staff believed that more students should be using the facility. The staff discussed ways to improve the program and asked participants in the youth program what they thought could be done to improve the attendance. What resulted was a remodeling of the facility and improvement in services in order to attract participants. The staff redesigned rooms, improved lighting, purchased furniture and posters to enhance the appearance of the homework facility. Computers, software, other supplies, and additional resource books were provided to supplement the existing supplies. Volunteer tutors were recruited to help the students with homework. The results of the restructuring created an environment conducive to learning that reflected positive outcomes for the participants: (a) increased the number of participants utilizing the facility, (b) assisted students with their homework, (c) improved their grades, and (d) helped to positively change the attitudes of many of the students towards homework.

Results

The writer expected an increase in the number of children who utilized the homework program. Before the restructuring was initiated, 20 elementary students were the total number of students registered in the homework component. The average attendance on a given day was eight (see Chart 1).

Chart 1



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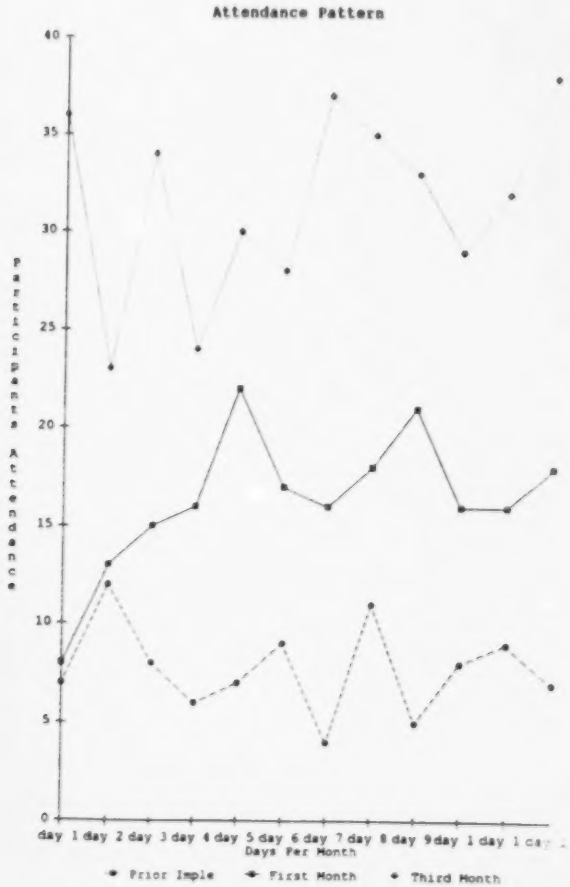
Since the restructuring of the program, 80 students have registered and used the program in the afternoon and another 15 participants sought help in the evening. During the afternoon, the number of students steadily increased. The first month of the program had an average attendance of 16 participants (see Chart 2) each day. By the end of the third month of the program, the average attendance was 31 students (see Chart 2) per day. Although the evening program did not register as many participants, the 15 participants utilizing the facility demonstrated the need for the program.

Chart 2



The writer thought that the restructuring of the homework program would develop a working relationship with the teachers and administrators in the schools. While contact was established with the faculty in the school where most of the participants attended, the amount of communication was disappointing and infrequent. After the initial homework workshop was given involving the staff in a discussion about effective homework assignments, and the goals and expectations of the homework component, formal interaction with most of the staff was not established again until they completed the teacher questionnaire. The inconsistent communication was mainly due to the youth center's staff's time restraints.

The writer expected that students would be motivated to complete their homework assignment if they attended the homework component. Sixty-six participants responded to the question about motivation on the questionnaire. Of that number sixty-two of them asserted that they were more motivated to complete their homework since they started to attend **ACTION YOUTH** (see Table 6).

TABLE 6

Student Motivation

Since you joined the homework program, do you feel more motivated to complete your homework?

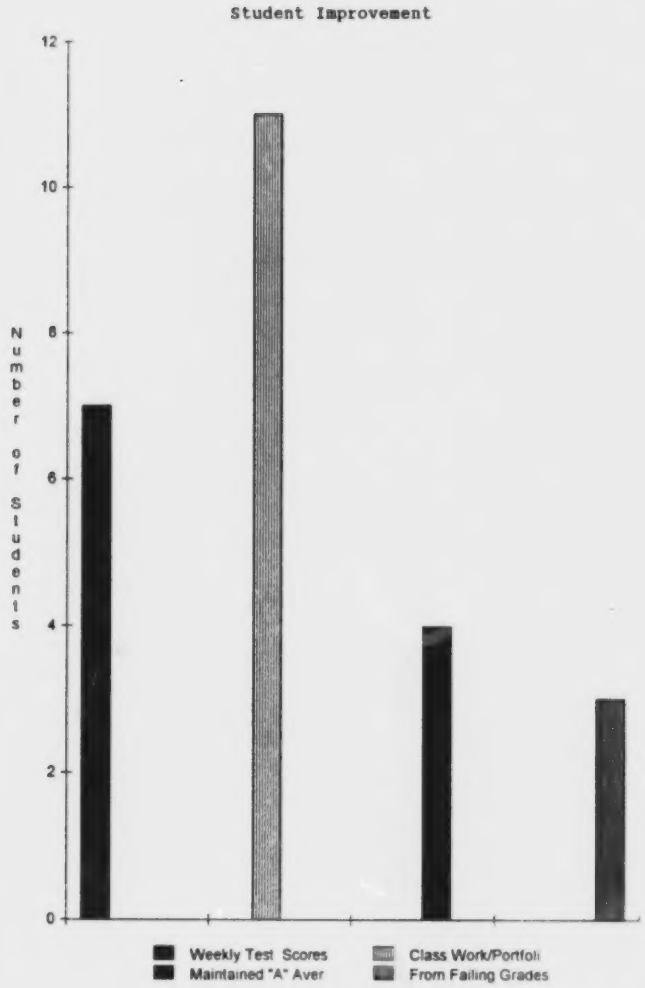
Yes	No
62	4

One student commented that she still doesn't like to do the homework but the homework program makes it more pleasant to do. This writer assumes that most, if not all the participants, still do not enjoy homework but at least there is now an established support system firmly in place that eases some of the problems for them.

One of the outcomes expected from the implementation of the program was the improvement of students' grades who utilized the homework facility. After scoring, reviewing, and analyzing the teachers' comments (Appendix D), the writer believes that there were some very positive outcomes.

The questionnaire was given to teachers of students who only attended the after school component. Of that number, teachers noted progress by some of the participants. Teachers verified that (a) seven students demonstrated improvement in weekly test scores, (b) eleven students improved in class work and in the quality of work handed in for homework, (c) four students at least maintained their "A" average, and (d) three students have actually improved their grades from failing grades to passing grades (see Chart 3).

Chart 3



Some teachers commented regarding a few of the students. "When Sindy came to us in December, school was not a priority for her. However, I do see an improvement and I'm sure that her grades will improve if she continues with her positive outlook. Thank you for your support and cooperation." Another teacher responded, "Melissa was and is

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a good cooperative student. From my observation she started the year doing well and is continuing."

However, there were some disappointments in the progress of some of the participants. One teacher expressed her concern about one of the participants. "Raymonde seems to have given up." In the case of Raymonde, the teacher and I discussed what other possible strategies each one of us could employ to help her. Raymonde and her parent were also involved in a conference regarding Raymonde's seemingly regression. At the time of this writing, it is too soon to observe further regression or progress.

The writer expected the parents' responses to be positive about the program. However, she didn't envision their perception of their children's attitude towards homework to be so overwhelming improved. Of the forty-five parents (representing about 60 of the participants) responding to the questionnaire (Appendix F) 40 parents felt that their children's attitude towards their homework was vastly improved (see Table 7).

TABLE 7

Parent's Perception of Child's Attitude

My child has a more positive attitude about homework since attending the after school homework program.

Strongly Agree	Agree Somewhat	Do not Agree
40	5	0

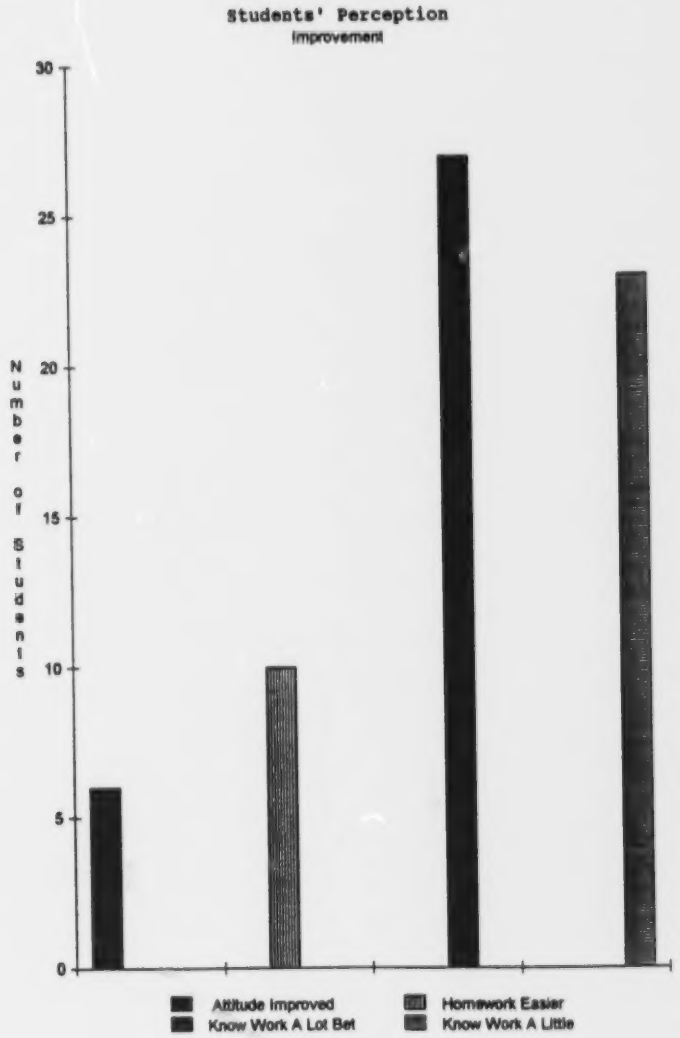
The other five parents thought that their child's attitude improved slightly. All of the parents believed that the program provided sufficient homework help. One parent wanted the staff to give additional homework to the students. However, the staff explained that this suggestion was not plausible or even fair to the participants.

Unexpected Outcomes

Besides the above-mentioned expected outcomes, other positive outcomes resulted as a consequence of the renovated and restructured homework component. Some teachers noted on the questionnaire (Appendix D) that while some students did not demonstrate improvement in their academic skills, they reflected improvement in other areas. Ten students demonstrated improvement in social skills, and five other students were recognized for their improved attitude, effort and cooperativeness.

From the students' point of view, they unanimously want the program to continue as they also indicated that other benefits were a consequence of their attending the homework program (see Chart 4).

Chart 4



Discussion

The increase in the number of participants attending the homework program was dramatic. At the time of this writing anyone registering for the homework component was placed on a waiting list because additional tutors are required to meet the needs of the participants. The writer

concludes that the combination of changes made the difference in attendance. Redesigning the homework program created an atmosphere that was conducive to learning (Appendix H). The books, the bright lights, the resources helped the participants to focus on the goal, the completion of the homework. The rooms were comfortable especially after the main room and the room adjacent to the gymnasium were also redesigned to accommodate the additional participants. The remodeling of the facility relayed a positive message to the participants that homework is important, essential to learning, and it's so special that a distinctive place should be set aside to help to support that experience.

Once the program was underway, staff was attuned to the needs of the participants. The participants witnessed the staff consider their requests for additional space and alter plans to accommodate their wishes. This minor change was significant because the participants recognized that personnel were willing to be flexible and listen to what was needed for them to be comfortable.

There were other concrete factors that contributed to the increase in the number of participants. The employment of computers in the program served as an incentive for the participants to join the program. In addition to using the computers to reinforce math and science skills, there were software programs that exposed the students to typing, foreign languages, vocabulary improvement, problem solving,

and resource information. These software packages appealed to the participants and in many instances, they integrated them with their homework assignments as well as used them after they completed their homework.

One of the success stories with the computer was the new format with the newsletter. (see appendix G). The participants' involvement in the newsletter created an atmosphere of excitement as they collaborated to personalize the newsletter. Many people commented that the newsletter seemed to be different and was received with overwhelming enthusiasm.

A problem the staff encountered was the insufficient number of computers for the participants. Time restrictions had to be placed on computer use. This was frustrating for the participants and the staff. To alleviate this problem, the participants were permitted to use the computers even after the homework program was officially completed. Sometimes, the participants were operating the computers when the evening students arrived.

On occasions, an adult could not be in the computer room with the students because of the demands for help with the homework assignments. To correct this problem, several of the students were chosen to be computer supervisors. They were taught before the others how to use the education software games. Their responsibility was to teach other participants the games. In addition to teaching

responsibility to the participants, these assigned job responsibilities helped to maintain a smooth flow in the computer room . One participant chosen to be a computer supervisor was given the duty in order to keep him engaged in positive activities. He was a fifth grade student who had more computer knowledge than most of the other students. However, he was a discipline problem because he would disrupt the other participants when he had completed his homework assignment and designated computer time. Delegating him the responsibility to change the software, assist others with a new game, and register the time for the participants to be on the computers, decreased his "acting out" and improved his self-esteem. When he was asked what he enjoyed most about the homework program, he responded that he really liked his job as a computer supervisor.

To further support the participants with their homework assignments, volunteer tutors were recruited. The availability of tutors contributed to the increase in the number of participants involved in **ACTION YOUTH**. The need for tutors was one of the requests by participants when they completed the questionnaire (see Appendix A) advising the staff of what changes they would like to envision take place in the homework program.

Tutors serve as a personal support for students. However, what the staff initially noticed was a hesitancy by the students to approach the volunteer tutors or deny they

needed help. Nevertheless, as the sessions progressed, trust formed between the participants and the tutors. When the participants recognized that the tutors were supportive of them, non-judgmental, and were there to respond to their needs, they were more willing to come forward for help. As noted previously, a second invitation for volunteers was issued because the number of volunteers were inadequate.

This writer had a difficult time helping the number of participants that needed intensive help with their assignments because of the insufficient number of volunteers. Until she recruited more volunteers on the second request, the writer actually enlisted the help of the junior high school participants on Thursdays. The junior high students were assigned younger students to tutor. They were very competent and patient. However, the staff didn't want to utilize them permanently because they also had assignments to complete. Eventually, more adult volunteers came forward to help. The increased number of volunteers decreased the work load for the writer and allowed her to spend additional time with those who needed intensive help. As of this writing, even more students have come to register for **ACTION YOUTH**. However, the staff had to finally initiate a waiting list. Besides the dramatic increase in the numbers of participants joining the program, other positive results were noted that this writer would like to discuss.

Twenty-one students improved their academic grades, or

at least demonstrated progress in their class work or portfolios. This number represented approximately one-fourth of the students registered in the afternoon program. This writer doesn't think that the homework program can take full credit for the accomplishments of these participants, but the staff does think that the assistance rendered contributed to the students' success.

Although the majority of the students did not record progress in the academic subjects, the teachers indicated that 15 participants either demonstrated improved social skills or displayed improved attitudes, motivation, or effort in their respective classes. Although further study is needed in these areas, these additional skills can be the prerequisites for progress in the academic skills.

Students maintained that they were more motivated to complete their homework assignments since attending **ACTION YOUTH**. This writer assumes that the combination of tutors, snacks, recreation, and computer instruction were excellent incentives that contributed to their motivation. One student from the evening program stated that she liked to come to the program and used the computer room because her home had too many distractions. At **ACTION YOUTH** she could close the door and muffle the sounds. At home this was impossible to do. Another participant in the evening remarked that the time spent in the youth center was the only time that there was any caring or order in his life, and how he wished the

center was opened 24 hours.

The students initially attended the program for different reasons. Some were actually forced to attend the program by their parents. Yet, all sixty-six of them who responded to the survey (Appendix C) said that they would come to the program next year, and recommend the homework facility to their friends.

The parents overwhelmingly credited **ACTION YOUTH** with improving their children's attitude towards homework. The writer believes that their response is contributed to the decreased tension at home between the child and the parent regarding the homework. Before **ACTION YOUTH**, the child went home and in some cases procrastinated before doing the assignments, if at all, or had to wait for the parents for some help with the homework. Now, for the most part, when the child comes home from the homework component, most if not all the homework is completed. The parent can review the homework, sign it if required, and perhaps spend some recreational time with her sibling.

The writer thought that she would develop a working relationship with the teachers of the students on a weekly or biweekly basis. However, this never materialized. This writer discovered that she could not find time to meet with the teachers consistently. On occasions, during the implementation, she did converse with a few teachers regarding four students. These students were either

exhibiting aggressive behavior towards the other students, or having great difficulty in several subject areas. After talking with the teachers, the writer was able to implement additional incentives to help the participants.

While the program was effective, the staff and volunteers weren't able to meet the needs of all of the participants. One student comes to mind. The participant was transferred four times during three years of schooling, taken out of scouts because of his anti-social behavior, and forced to come to the homework component to improve his pro-social behavior. The participant immediately demonstrated violent behavior towards the other students. He either hit them, tore their papers, or broke their pencils. Of course, he was encouraged to change his behavior. The participant needed one-on-one support during the entire time of the homework and recreational component. As of this writing, the participant is not attending the program and is in counseling.

Recommendation

The restructured homework component was very effective. The program extended its services as well as increased the number of students attending the program. In addition, the participants have already requested for the program to be extended and continued. A multitude of factors contributed to the success of the program.

Providing an environment conducive to learning is a critical part of implementation. Although this stage of planning occurs prior to implementation, it is imperative that space is ready for the participants before they attend. What is also important is to get input from others to help in the design and furnishing of the facility. This writer recognized that once implementation was initiated changes had to be made, so it's important to remain flexible and adapt to the number of participants and their grade levels. If the facility is limited in space, a maximum number has to be a "cut off" point in order to accommodate students and their needs.

Volunteers are pivotal for implementation. This writer made a mistake in implementing the program at the same time for requests for volunteers. Volunteers should have been in place prior to implementation. In addition, the writer should have contacted local colleges for support. Her base for volunteer support would have been broader especially for the afternoon hours. High schools who involve seniors in performing community service as a prerequisite for graduation would have been another excellent resource. This writer is in the process of contacting educators from the local schools to ascertain the possibility of receiving help for the fall term.

Employing computers as an incentive for attendance at a homework component is an effective strategy. For some

participants it was their first exposure to computers, and for all of the participants it was an opportunity for them to experience how computers can reinforce skills through educational games and other software. What is suggested is to make sure that there are a variety of educational software. This writer started with five different educational games for the participants in the afternoon program. She added six supplementary software programs and as of this writing has ordered sixteen extra software packages to complement the previous purchases.

Scheduling is an important segment of the homework component. The writer suggests that the program begins directly after school for the elementary and junior high school students. This time period is of benefit to the parents and students. Parents are reassured that their children are in a safe supervised environment, and for the students, this time period supports continuity. Since most of the high school students had different schedules and travelled a distance to and from school, it was impossible to institute a program directly after school for these participants. In addition, their home responsibilities and other interests dictated different hours for the homework schedule.

The writer also recommends that there are no other activities scheduled that coincide with the homework component. This strategy limits distractions, keeps

students' focus, and reaffirms correct study habits. When it is infeasible to defer other activities, homework assistance should be as far away as possible from the other endeavors.

Advertisement for the homework component is an important prerequisite to implementation. It is essential that the staff of schools and parents are notified. Places of worship are also excellent choices for informing people about the program. This writer also recommends that advertisements about homework assistance programs should be posted in locations where youth like to patronize such as libraries, video stores, movie theaters, pizza parlors, bowling alleys, or athletic and sneaker stores.

Creating a special name, **ACTION YOUTH**, for the homework program solidified the importance of the program. The participants were able to identify with the homework program, and felt proud that they were part of it. This writer recommends that anyone interested in implementing a program consider giving the project a distinctive name with input from the participants.

Offering snacks to the participants and giving them an opportunity to relax before beginning homework instruction are practical strategies. What is critical though is to set time limits otherwise, the participants procrastinate. Involving the students in snack choices and clean-up expedite the process and permits a smoother transition from snack time to homework instruction.

The restructuring of the homework program communicated significant messages to the participants: a) homework is meaningful, b) the staff is willing to address their problems, c) involve them in the process of change, and d) allow them to share in the decision-making process.

Dissemination

The writer plans to share her project with others. The principal and the teachers of the local parochial school have expressed an interest in the results. Perhaps, they can parallel some of the incentives employed by this writer in their after school program or come forward with additional support or recommendations.

The writer will share her program with the local high schools and colleges in order to attract volunteers through internship programs. The writer can also investigate the possibility of networking with the colleges to assist with library resources, career workshops, and seminars. As an incentive for participants, the colleges may be willing to invite the students to career days and other activities on campus. The colleges may consider **ACTION YOUTH** as a model for other programs and invite the writer as a guest lecturer to discuss her results with teachers-in-training.

Other ways to disseminate information about the homework program is through the local newspapers and community newsletters. This writer has just submitted an

article to two local newspapers. She expects publication shortly. The published articles should reach a broader base of people who may want to volunteer time or give support in other ways. What the writer hopes After publication, other inquiries may result.

The writer plans to contact the business community to request donations and funding for the program. Invitations and solicitations may encourage financial investment so as to increase the number of tutors as well as funding for resource materials and computer equipment and supplies.

The writer was just informed by a local civic council group that funding for supplies for **ACTION YOUTH** will be given to the program. The modest source of revenue, $500.00, reaches beyond financial support. There will be further advertisement regarding the program that should enhance its reputation and effectiveness within the community.

Conclusion

ACTION YOUTH was developed to provide an incentive for students to utilize the homework facility in the youth center. The program's effectiveness was contributed to many factors including tutoring assistance, an attractive environment, employment of computers, and to a sensitive staff who were concerned for students. Once implementation was initiated, minor changes were made to accommodate the students. However, without students' willingness to be

responsible for their homework the program could never have been as effective as it was.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE
HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Appendix A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Re: Homework Assignments

School_____Grade_____

1. How well are you doing in school? Circle (1)
   a. grade "A" c. grade "C" e. grade "F"
   b. grade "B" d. grade "D"

2. Would your grades be better if you spent more time doing your homework?
   a. yes
   b. no

3. Homework should help you understand what you learned in school. Do you agree with this statement.
   a. yes
   b. no

4. Answer 4a or 4b.

4a. How many minutes do you spend doing your homework?_____

4b. How many hours do you spend doing your homework?_____

5. Where do you do your homework? Circle all that apply.
   a. school c. home e. library
   b. youth center d. subway/bus f. other

6. How often do you do your homework? Check one (1).
   a. all of the time_____
   b. most of the time_____
   c. rarely (only do homework 2 of 5 times given)_____
   d. never do it_____

7. Do you ever need help with your homework? Circle (1).
   a. yes
   b. no

8. What subjects give you the most trouble? Circle as many as necessary.
   a. Math d. English g. Social Studies
   b. Science e. Spanish h. Italian
   c. French f. Hygiene i. Shop classes

9. Why do these subjects give you trouble? Circle Answers.
   a. textbook d. graphs or tables
   b. boring e. don't understand the teacher
   c. lazy f. dislike the subject

APPENDIX B

ATTENDANCE SHEET

Appendix B

DAILY ATTENDANCE SHEET

HOMEWORK CENTER

DATE_____

STUDENT'S NAME

APPENDIX C

STUDENT EVALUATION

Appendix C

STUDENT EVALUATION

When did you join the homework program?_____

1. Why did you first come to the homework program?
   a. your parents made you come
   b. your teacher suggested that you come
   c. a friend told you about it
   d. the youth center's workers invited you
   e. other_____

2. Since you joined the homework program do you
   a. have a better attitude about doing homework?
   b. think the homework is easier to do?
   c. get the help you need?
   d. think a, b, and c are true?
   e. none of the above.

3. Since joining the homework program, do you feel more motivated to complete your homework?
   a. yes
   b. no

4. Since you joined the homework program, do you feel that you know your work better?
   a. yes, a whole lot better
   b. yes, a little better
   c. no better

5. Do you want to continue to come to the homework program?
   a. yes
   b. no

6a. Answer "a" or "b"
   a. Why would you want to continue to come to the homework program?

_____

_____

   b. Why wouldn't you want to continue to come to the homework program?

_____

_____

7. What do you like about the homework program?

_____

_____

8. What didn't you like about the homework program?

_____

_____

9. Would you tell your friends about the homework program and suggest that they come?
   a. yes
   b. no

10. Should we continue to have the homework program?
    a. yes
    b. no

11 Why?

_____

_____

12. What can we do to make the homework program better?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix D
Teacher Questionnaire

Dear Subject Class Teacher,

We are in the process of evaluating students' progress in their subject areas since they have attended the homework component in the after school center.

Can you take a few minutes from your busy schedule to answer the following questions? We appreciate your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Student_____Subject_____

Today's Date_____

Date Student Started the program_____

1. The student is an "A" student who has at least maintained his/her grades
   a. The student has maintained his/her grades.
   b. The student's grades have fallen off.
   c. The statement does not apply to the student.

2. The students' weekly test scores have improved since attending the homework component.
   a. yes
   b. no
   c. The statement does not apply to the student.

3. The student has improved in concept development as evidenced in their portfolios.
   a. yes
   b. no
   c. The statement does not apply to the student.

4. The students' weekly test scores have improved from failing grades to passing.
   a. yes
   b. no
   c. The statement does not apply to the student.

5. Although the test scores do not indicate improvement, the teacher can see marked improvement in students's understanding of subject matter from oral responses and participation in class discussion.
   a. yes
   b. no
   c. The statement does not apply to the student.

6. The student's attitude towards school seems to be more positive since attending the after school homework program.
   a. yes
   b. no noticeable difference.

7. The student test scores have not improved. However, other improvements have been noticed.
   a. effort
   b. attitude
   c. cooperation
   d. all of the above
   e. The statement does not apply to the student.

8. Have you noticed any improvement in the social skills development of the student?
   a. very much improved
   b. improved somewhat
   c. no noticeable difference in cooperation and sharing with his or her peers.

9. Any additional comments are welcomed.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX E
TEACHER SURVEY

Appendix E
SURVEY

Dear Administrators and Teachers:

We are in the process of evaluating our attempt to develop a working relationship between the after school homework program and the school.

Can you please help us out by taking a few minutes to complete this survey? We thank you for your time.

1. Has the communication lines been opened between the teacher and the after school homework program?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree somewhat
   c. do not agree
   d. did not know the program existed

2. The communication between the after school homework program and the school was
   a. consistent
   b. infrequent
   c. too frequent
   d. a bother
   e. non-existent

3. Has the after school homework program supported your efforts in providing learning experiences for the children?
   a. strongly agree
   b. agree somewhat
   c. do not agree

4. How has the after school homework program supported your efforts in providing learning experiences for the children?

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Information shared during the homework workshop presentation was
   a. very helpful and informative
   b. reinforced present homework practices
   c. was not of any help

6. Materials distributed during the homework workshop
   a. were used
   b. will be utilized
   c. were not of any use to you
   d. shared with another colleague

7. How can the after school homework program further support you in your efforts to provide positive learning experiences for the students?

_____

_____

_____

8. Any additional comments?

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX F
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix F
Parent Questionnaire

Dear Parents,

We are in the process of evaluating the after school homework program.

Can you please help us out by taking a few minutes to complete this questionnaire?

_____1. My child has a more positive attitude about homework since attending the after school homework program.

a. strongly agree
b. agree somewhat
c. do not agree

_____2. The after school homework program helped you by providing homework assistance for your child.

a. strongly agree
b. agree somewhat
c. do not agree

_____3. When my child came home, he/she seemed to be more relaxed since the homework was completed or almost completed at the after school homework center.

a. strongly agree
b. agree somewhat
c. do not agree

_____4. Communication was established between the home and the school as a result of the homework help program.

a. strongly agree
b. agree somewhat
c. do not agree

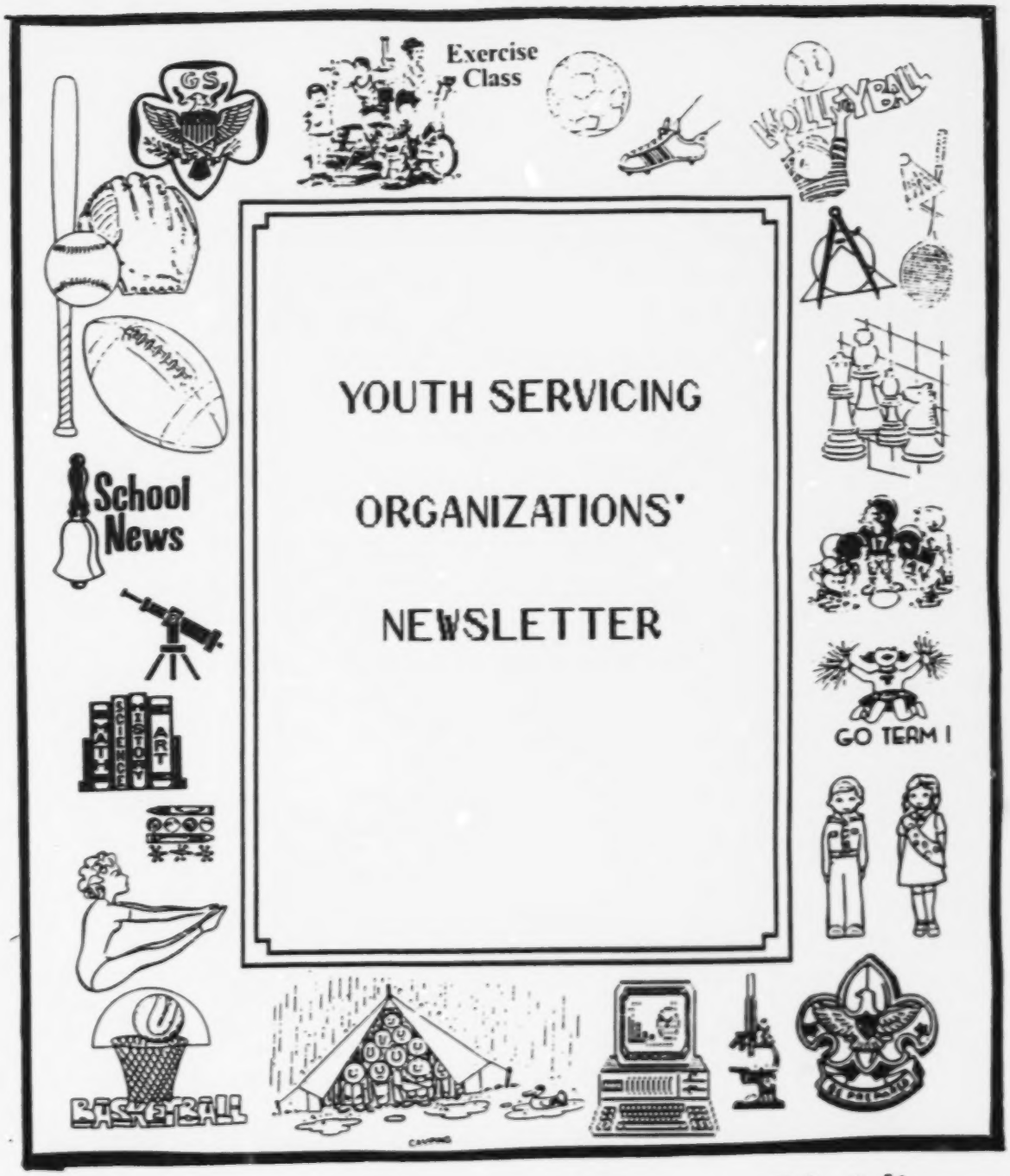
_____5. The calendar of events that was given to you each month helped you plan better and kept you inform as to the activities.

a. strongly agree
b. agree somewhat
c. do not agree

6. Any additional comments?

Appendix G
Newsletter

Appendix G
Newsletter



YOUTH SERVICING ORGANIZATIONS' NEWSLETTER

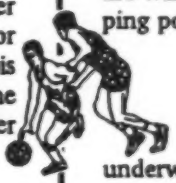
NEWSLETTER/DESIGN/EDITORS: ANNETTE FRANCES HALL, YOUTH DIRECTOR
CATHERINE CABEZA, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Vol. 2 #1
Nov./Dec. 1992

YOUTH CENTER

The youth center offers a safe, clean, well supervised environment for different age groups in the neighborhood.

The homework resource center is called the Action Center (Academic and Computer Training, Instruction and Orientation for Neighborhood Youth). The newly created room is buzzing with activity and different projects. See the last page for the children's own created newsletter and their opinions about the homework center.



The center's basketball teams are in the process of formation and have begun to play scrimmages against several other teams.
The center has three teams representing Saint Francis Xavier and because of the tremendous turnout, we may need to sponsor a fourth team.

The junior varsity team just played two games against the 78th precinct's squad. Although we lost both of the games, the games were close and very well played.

On Friday, the 13th of November, the junior varsity and the 15-16 year-old high school teams hosted the YMCA teams. Excitement was in the air as the players on both sides took to the court for warmups.

The JV's offense was led by forwards, Jose (S) Rivera, Wata, Sigfried, Fritz, Darnel, Rommel, and Leon. The guards were Jerome, Jamel, Jeremy, and Wesley. Darryl and Wata played center. Although the team lost a close game, 41-36, their team play is much improved as they prepare for the regular season.

The second half of the double-header was as exciting. The 15-16 year old group were a much shorter team than the YMCA's team. In a tightly played game, the 15-16 year old team lost 31-27. SFX was represented by the fast moving forwards, Shinrod, Justin, Anthony, Kwamne, and Steve. Hendricks and Vladimir were the centers who had the awesome task of blocking the taller opposing centers. Yusuf, Khemnas, Ernest, Augshensu, and Robert were the ball handlers who also scored a few points for the team.

The fitness center is utilized by the teenagers on Tuesdays and Fridays. The center helps the teenagers to tone up and work on different parts of the body. The fitness room is an excellent place to pass time while the members are waiting their turn to play basketball, pool, or ping pong.

The Teen Club meetings are well underway. The two different groups meet on the first and third Mondays of the month. Up and coming activities sponsored by the teen club include the junior high school dance on December 11th in the lyceum from 8:00-11:00 p.m. and the overnight retreat on the same day.

Other Activities are plan and will be co-hosted by all of the different organizations within the youth program. Look for additional activities in the next issue of the newsletter. In the meantime keep in mind the Children's Carnival in February. The carnival last February was a tremendous success and the children had a great time. Our plans are to make the carnival even more enjoyable for the children this time around.

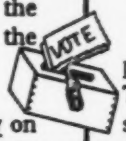
April seems far away but after the winter months we are sure you are looking for some outdoor activities. There will be a 5K and 10K race for all ages in Prospect Park. Come and join us! More details will be forthcoming.

CONGRATULATIONS: Ernest is the recipient of the Randy Evans Scholarship Award. Ernest is a member of the youth program and a graduate from

UPDATE: Dwidson is attending St. Michaels in Vermont, George . travels to Fairfield College, Ernest . is an undergraduate at Columbia, Johnny plays ball for Connecticut, and William is not only volunteering his time as a basketball coach but he is a junior at Baruch College. Shiler is also working and volunteering as a coach at the youth center.

The school continues to provide a fine education for the children in the neighborhood. In addition, some of the children have visited Philadelphia and other places in order to enrich their learning.

· held student elections to coincide with the presidential campaign. It enhanced their learning experience as the children compared their class elections to the presidential race.



The school sponsored its talent show on November 13. The auditorium was completely filled. Parents and friends applauded the tremendous talent that was displayed by the students.

Other activities sponsored by the school includes the annual flea market on Saturday, December 5. Visitors to the flea market should be surprised at the bargains. Why not stop by and enjoy yourself and don't forget to bring the children. Santa Claus will be there to greet them and while you're at it, have the children and you take your picture with him for a nominal fee.

GIRL SCOUTS/BROWNIES

There are three days for girl scout troops. On Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m. girl scout troops meet with their scout leader, Ms.

On Thursdays, Mrs. meets with her troop in the lyceum at 5:30 p.m.

On Saturdays at 12:30 in the lyceum, Brownies and the younger girl scouts meet. The Brownie Leader is Alice and the Girl Scout leader is Julia

The forthcoming newsletter will mention some of the many activities planned and already completed by the scouts. For example, on Nov. 14, the Brownies enjoyed themselves at the Children's Book and Activity Fair.

LITTLE LEAGUE

The little league sponsors baseball and soccer teams.

On November 14, the auditorium was filled with baseball players with their families and friends. The players were awarded trophies for their efforts and sportsmanship during the past season.

Thanks were given to the players, the parents, and the coaches who volunteer their time The businesses who generously donate money for sponsorship was also acknowledged for their commitment to the program and the young people in the neighborhood.

The soccer season continues through December with games in Prospect Park. All ages are welcomed to come to the park and cheer the youngsters.

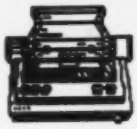
BOY SCOUTS

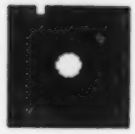
Boy Scouts meet on Wednesdays in the lyceum at 7:30 p.m. If you are interested stop in and talk to one of the scouts or the scout master, Peter Weekend trips are well underway and more are planned. Other activities include helping out at the Flea Market and sponsoring breakfast meals on Sunday mornings.

CUB SCOUTS

Cub Scouts are on Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m. in the lyceum. Cubbies are planning many trips and activities. Anyone interested come by and visit. The Cub Master, Anne will be more than happy to answer your questions and welcome you to the cub scout program.

ACTION CENTER





ACADEMIC AND COMPUTER TRAINING, INSTRUCTION AND ORIENTATION FOR NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH

The homework program is fun! We have lots of things to do. Miss Annette helps us to do our homework. After we finish our homework, we can work with the computer. My favorite game is "Math Outnumbered"! It's a fun game. It is like Nintendo. You can "zap" with a "laser zapper". I think people should come to the program because it's an easier way to do homework.

Marcos
Grade 4-2

P.S. We also eat snacks!!!

I like coming to homework help because there are a lot of things to do. Miss Annette helps us a lot and she is very nice. Sometimes we have surprises like pizza. I really love eating pizza. After homework, I can run around and play with my friends, Valery and Marcos. The math games help a lot. I do the math better. The homework program is very much fun.
PEACE DUDES!!!!!!!

David
Grade 4-1

In the homework program, we are suppose to be quiet or work with someone else without making too much noise. Sometimes we get too loud and the grownups ask us to be more quiet. The best thing I like is to do math on the computer.

Raymonde
Third Grade

Homework center is fun!!! Kids can do homework and if they have a problem, they can get help with it.

Rosalie
Fifth Grade

I think the homework program is fun. I do homework and after I finish the homework, I play on the computer games. My favorite game is Math Blaster. Sometimes, I teach the new kids how to play the computer games. I have become an expert in teaching the games to the newer kids.

Liza .
fifth grade

The homework program is fun because it helps us a lot when we need help in anything. The fun part is when we get to use the computers.

Winsbert
Joe

Homework program is fun. I am one of the volunteers who helps the younger kids with their homework. The computers are the best thing I like with the program. I learn with them and I help the younger kids to get started with the programs. They seem to be very happy when they can work on their own on the computers.

Melinda
eighth grader

Appendix H
Photographs

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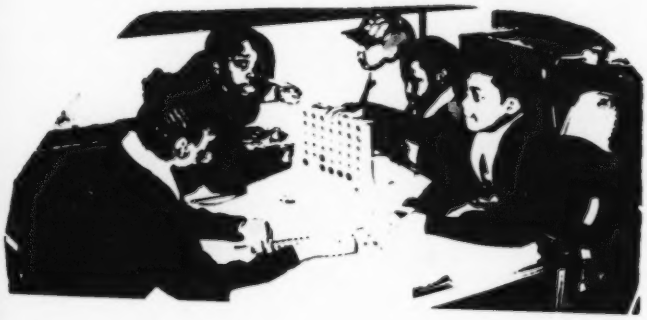
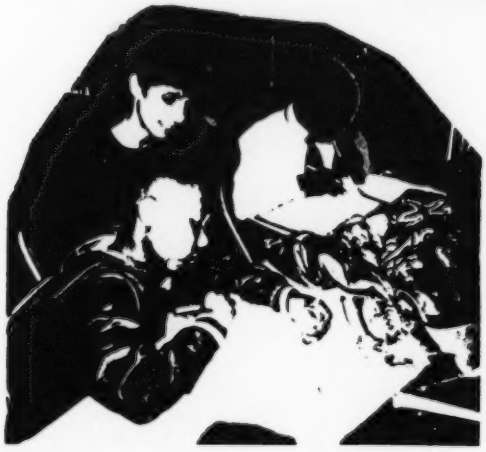
Photographs





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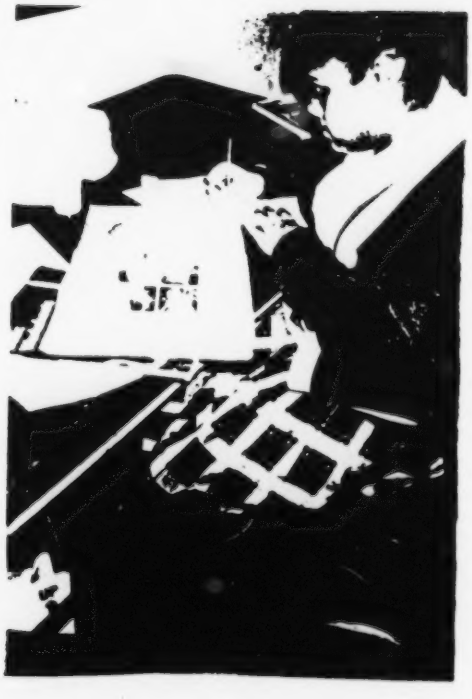

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